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The History of Gingee

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THE HISTORY OF GINGEE.

Nothing arrests the attention of a traveller in India more than the appearance of the innumerable ruined fortresses and other vestiges of ancient glory that lie scattered all over the country. Each mournful relic has got its own tale to tell, of the ruthless vandalism of the foreign invader, the bitter violence of internecine warfare or the languishing [illegible] of successive dynasties of Indian rulers. Besides the architectural attractions they display to students of art, they embody in themselves a world of political strife, triumph and defeat, which has an undying interest for the historian.

Up in the north-western corner of the district of South Arcot, extending for about fourteen or fifteen miles, in the centre of the newly-formed taluk of Gingee, are several hills* whose summits are very jagged, each consisting of a central stratified rock covered with huge rounded boulders devoid of all vegetation, the mountains crowding about in wild confusion. These uninviting heights, covered only with a thick growth of thorny shrubs, are eminently fitted to serve as the homes of marauding banditti or of daring political adventurers who, with the strength of a small impregnable fort, are able to carve for themselves principalities in times of disorder. The Fort of Gingee stands on three of these hills which form the angular points of a rough equilateral triangle, and the whole space is enclosed by a huge rampart about sixty feet in thickness and a ditch about eighty feet in breadth. The walls which are even now in a state of good preservation are built of strong blocks of granite. The whole of this huge enclosed tract forms the

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* Lat. 12° 10′ to 12° 18′. Long. 79° 25′ to 79° 30′.

Lower Fort. The three rocks form three citadels of which that situated in the west called *Rajagiri* (originally [illegible]amalagiri, and then *Anandagiri*) is the most impregnable, being nearly eight hundred feet in height. Just about its middle the hill shoots up perpendicularly at its northern end into a tremendous eminence, and the summit is cut off from all communication with the only path by a deep natural chasm about ten yards broad over which there is now a small wooden bridge. The natural strength of this rock is still further increased by the construction of embrasured walls and gateways along all possible shelves and precipitous edges and the whole hill appears to be one mass of fortifications rising tier above tier in wild picturesqueness.

At the base of this hill is what might be called the Inner Citadel equipped with walls, bastioned gateways and all other strategic requirements. The rock on the north called *Krishnagiri* is the next in importance and it has a complete set of fortifications, not to speak of such buildings of utility as halls and granaries on its summit. Access to these two citadels is obtained by long flights of steps hewn with great ingenuity out of the boulders themselves. There are two other rocks both lying by the side of *Rajagiri* called respectively *Chakkili Drug* and *Chandrayan Drug* not of very great consequence and containing some small offshoots of the main fortifications. In the Lower Fort there are two pagodas dedicated to the gods Venkatarama and Pattabhirama, which before their destruction by the French from Pondicherry were adorned with carved pillars and ornamented walls, but are now dismantled and overgrown with rank vegetation.* There are also two huge granaries of great dimensions and the least noise made in them echoes tremendously. The Kalyāṇa Mahāl, a brick structure consisting of barrack-like rooms surrounding a rectangular court-yard, [illegible] the residence of the later rulers of the place; and on one side of it rises a

* Description of Gingee by Col. Foord in *The Madras Journal of Literature and Science*, Vol. V, pp. 848—53.

The pillars round the statue of Dupleix in the Place de la République in Pondicherry once belonged to Gingee. The temples also served as a quarry for neighbouring builders. The Jains of Sittāmūr, a village in the vicinity, are said to have carried off a stone-car to serve their god.

peculiar eight-storeyed square tower. Besides there are large stables and godowns all of which bespeak the magnitude and prowess of its ancient chiefs. A sight of the fortifications affords one a vivid conception of the huge engineering feats of which Indians were capable in the earlier centuries.

The Tamil name *Senji* whose Sanskrit form is *Chenchi* with the popular appellation of *Gingee* has been variously derived. It is supposed to have had its origin from *Sanjivi*, the famous panacea of Hindu mythology; it has been explained as the combination of two roots, *Sam* (pleasure) and *Ji* (giving); the name has also been traced to Singavaram, a neighbouring Vaishnava shrine, whose god is supposed to be the guardian deity of the place.* Local tradition has however another explanation to offer. The legend runs that seven virgin sisters who once lived here—one of them, *Senjiamman*—were threatened with a violation of their chastity; and though rescued from danger by a valiant man named *Thadikara Virappan* they could not survive the insult offered to them and so committed suicide. Their spirits are even now believed to be haunting the place and are considered the *genii loci*. Each of them has got her own little shrine still existing and attracts votaries from the neighbourhood. It is very probable that *Senjiamman* who is worshipped on one of the heights gave her name to the particular hill and this afterwards came to be the common designation of the whole circle of hills and the village below. Another of the sisters *Kamalakanniamman* has a shrine dedicated to her at the base of the shooting scarp on *Rajagiri* which on certain days in the year is thronged with worshippers. It was originally known after the goddess as *Kamalagiri*, a circumstance that adds to the probability of the popular version of the derivation of the name.

I.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF GINGEE.

The origin of the place is lost in obscurity. That it could not have been founded earlier than the eleventh century is proved by an inscription of the reign of Aditya II Chola, a br[illegible] of Raja Raja the Great, (985—

* Garstin's *District Manual of South Arcot*, p. 411.

1013 A.D.) which tells us that a feudatory of the Chola sovereign was ruling over Palakunra Kottam, Singapura Nadu and Venkunra Kottam.* Palakunra Kottam is in the district of North Arcot and Singapuram is only Singavaram a few miles from Gingee noted for its rock-cut shrine of god Ranganadha. That Singapuram gave its name to the locality shows that the fort of Gingee had not then come into prominence or more probably had not yet been founded. Parantaka I Chola (900—950 A.D.) must have effectively ruled over the Gingee country, since his inscriptions have been found in places so far north as Conjeevaram and Udayendram in North Arcot; and from the time of Raja Raja the locality must have been in continuous possession of the Cholas. It is known that Jayangondachola Mandalam or Nadu Mandalam included all the tract which constituted later the kingdom of Gingee.† Even now there is a village called Jayangondān about two miles to the South-east of the fortress which might very probably have been founded by the Chola who conquered the province. Tradition ascribes the creation of Dēvanūr, a village about twenty miles from the place to a Chola by name Bhūloka Devendran.

In the course of the thirteenth century when the Chola power decayed and their dominions were overrun by the Pandyans from the South and the Hoysala Bellalas from Mysore the various feudatory chiefs of Tondaimandalam (the country round Conjeevaram) entered into offensive and defensive alliances among themselves ‡; and in this period of anarchy and reconstruction Gingee must have risen as an independent kingdom. An unbroken and more or less authentic narrative of the place and its fortunes might be formed from about 1200 A.D. (Fasli 610). The chief authority for the first two hundred years of its life is the *Complete History of the Carnatic Kings* (*Karnataka Rajakkal Savistara Charitam* found among the *Mackenzie Manuscripts* and compiled after a consultation of numerous authorities both Hindu and

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* *Epigraphical Report of 1900*, Inscription No. 68.

† Jayangondachola Mandalam stretched from Arcot to Tiruvādi on the S. Pennar and thus included Gingee and the surrounding region.

‡ *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. VIII, p. 277.

Muhammadan, by one Narayanan who claimed to be a descendant of the Ananda Kōn race of Gingee.* The narrative was written at the special request of Colonel William Macleod who was then acting as Commissioner at Arcot, the Madras Governor at that time being Lord William Bentinck. "The suggestion of an English gentleman produced that rare result, a native historian writing under the influence of good sense and in conformity to a prevailing degree with European notions of history......There are probably some anachronisms and errors; but the value of the whole seems to be considerable and the eighth section (concerning the Lower Carnataka country) down to the arrival of the English invaluable."† The book is fairly reliable in all historical details and is marked by an absence of exaggeration which is the bane of all early Indian chroniclers.

According to Narayanan, Gingee became a fortified place only about 1200 A.D. Ananda Kōn, a shepherd by caste, accidentally found a treasure in one of the cavities of the western hill while grazing his sheep. Making himself the head of a small band of warriors, he defeated the petty rulers of the neighbouring villages like Dēvanūr, Jayangondān and Mēlachēri (Old Gingee), and built a small fortress on *Kamalāgiri* which he renamed *Anandagiri* after himself. He raised his castemen to high places and bestowed on them the distinction of *Sammānamānār* (the honorable). He fortified Perumukkal near Tindivanam which was the scene of some operations in the Carnatic wars of the eighteenth century and Padaivedu near Polūr in North Arcot. After reigning gloriously for about fifty years he was succeeded by one Krishna Kōn about 1240 A.D. This chief perpetuated his name by fortifying the northern hill and naming it after himself.* Krishna Kōn was followed by two princes successively Kōnēri Kōn and Govinda Kōn who cut out the elaborate steps to the fortress on Krishnagiri and built the Gopalaswamy temple on its top. Puliya Kōn succeeded him about 1300 A.D. He excavated tanks and built rest-houses by the sides

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* The Mackenzie Manuscripts, Vol. I, p. 169.

† Taylor's *Examination and Analysis of the Mackenzie MSS.*, p. 27.

of the roads leading to Trichinopoly, Tanjore and Vēttavalam (a small Zamindari in the neighbourhood).*

Twenty years afterwards, this shepherd race was superseded by the chief of a neighbouring place, Kobilingan who belonged to the Kurumba caste and now ascended the throne of Gingee. He built a brick-fort at Séndamangalam in the taluk of Tirukōyilūr, dug some tanks, left others unfinished and cut out various channels for irrigation purposes some of which exist even to-day. He had a large number of feudatories under him, several of whom had fortresses at Asuppūr, Pelacuppār, Cuppam and other places. It was this Kobilingan that fell a prey to the ambition of Vijayanagar; but it is not known when and by which general the conquest was achieved. The loss of independence by the fort did not lead however to any diminution in its importance.

II.

GINGEE UNDER THE EMPIRE OF VIJAYANAGAR.

With the rise of Vijayanagar and its absorption of the greater part of South India, unity of control and administration once more spread throughout the country, and Gingee like other principalities was brought under its wide sovereignty. The subjection of the tract to the Rayas of Vijayanagar about the close of the fourteenth century is proved by a passage in the *Complete History of the Carnatic Kings* which says that about Fasli 800 (1390-91 A.D.) Gingee submitted to Vijayanagar to be held as a fief sending an annual tribute.† It is also known that the Gingee territory was under the control of Vijayanagar in 1371 A.D. Gōpana or Goppanārya a local chief ruling at Gingee about that time is said to have defeated the Tulushkas (Mussalmans), to have recovered from them the images of god Ranganadha and of his two wives and to have taken them from Tirupati to Singapuram (Singavaram). In 1371-72 A.D. (Saka Samvat 1293) he got the gods to their

* Succession of the Gingee Kings of the Kōn Dynasty:—Ananda (1190 to 1240 A.D.); Krishna (1240 to 1270 A.D.); Kōnēri (1270 to 1290 A.D.); Govinda (1290 to 1310 A.D.); and Puliyan (1810 to 1830 A.D.)

† *The Mackenzie MSS.*, Vol. I, p. 360.

temple at Srirangam and consecrated them.* This Gōpana was an officer of Chikka Kampana the son of Vira Bakkana †, and was a Brahman belonging to the Apastamba Sutra and the Bharadwaja Gotra.‡ Chikka Kampana took possession of the Rajaghambira Rajya, that is, extended his authority to even the Pandyan capital far beyond the confines of the Gingee territory.§ The Tulushkas referred to must have been the Mussalman chiefs of Madura who reigned there for about half a century after the return of Malik Kafur the general of Sultan Ala-uddin to Delhi.‖ A grant of Virupaksha of Vijayanagar$ dated 1382 A.D. confirms to the Brahmans of Alampundi in the province of Gingee the free-grant (Sarvamāniam) of the village made to them by his father.** In the Ādivaiāha temple at Singavaram there is an inscription of Virupaksha dated 1387 A.D. recording a gift.†† Hence as early as a generation after the foundation of the Empire of Vijayanagar its authority embraced all the Gingee country and extended even to the banks of the Vaighai in the far South.

Nothing definite is known of the history of Gingee for a period of nearly a hundred years. The *Mackenzie Manuscripts* give the name of a few chiefs who were ruling the kingdom under the sovereignty of the Rayas of Vijayanagar. The place had not yet become the seat of a regular Viceroy and there was no fixed succession of rulers. A copper plate grant says that in 1464 A.D. Vekatapathi Naick was the Raja of Gingee.‡‡ It is also possible to infer that the suzerainty of the kingdom was then vested in the hands of the Rayas of Vijayanagar. It was

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* *Epigraphical Report of* 1892, Inscription No. 55.

† Bukka I of Vijayanagar (1343—1379 A.D.)

‡ Inscription No. 250 of 1901.

§ *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. VI, p. 324.

‖ Caldwell's *History of Tinnevelly*, p. 42 and Sewell's *List of Antiquities*, Vol. II, p. 228. The Mussalman domination lasted from 1328 to 1370 A.D.

$ 1379—95 A.D.

** *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. III, pp. 224—226. The inscription implies that even before Saka Samvat 1305 or 1307 this portion of South Arcot had already come under the sway of Vijayanagar.

†† Inscription No. 234 of 1904.

‡‡ Sewell's *List of Antiquities*, Vol. II, p. 9.

perhaps this Naick who acquired notriety by his cruel persecution of the Jains in the neighbourhood in 1478 A.D.* But about 1480 A.D. the military commander Saluva Narasinga who later usurped the sovereignty of the Vijayanagar Empire ruled over its central division comprising roughly the present districts of North Arcot, South Arcot and Chingleput, as a semi-independent chief. To him is ascribed the construction of the forts of Chandragiri and Vellore. About the close of the century a number of Kavarai or Vaduga Sirdars of Vijayanagar were despatched southwards to strengthen the Raya's authority in the region. According to the *Complete History of the Carnatic Kings* these were sent by the great Krishna Deva; but the date 1460 A.D. (Fasli 870) given as the approximate time of their irruption is in conflict with the date of Krishna Deva Raya's reign (1509—1530 A.D.) Vaiyappa Naick, Tubaki Krishnappa Naick, Vira Vijaya Naick and Venkatappa Naick came down in a body to the South and encamped for a time at Gingee.† The former two remained permanently at the place while the latter engaged themselves in extending their arms southward into the Pandya country. Taking this statement in conjunction with the fact that new vigor and vitality were infused into the Empire on the accession of the Saluva line, it may be believed that Gingee and other important places in the Carnatic received vigerous Viceroys and regular help and advice from the capital. Thus about 1500 A.D. the previous remote and ineffectual sovereignty exercised by Vijayanagar over Gingee was now succeeded by a permanent occupation and control by one of its regular officers.

Vaiyappa Naick at Gingee made Tubaki Krishnappa Naick his second in command and prospective successor, then retired from active service and went back to Vijayanagar. Krishnappa ruled gloriously over all the coast-country from Nellore in the north to the Coleroon in the south up to 1521 A.D. (Sali 1443). He fortified *Anandagiri* on a grand scale and renamed it *Rayagiri* in honour of the Vijayanagar rulers. The construction of various other buildings is attributed to him, and

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* *The Mackenzie Manuscripts*, V[illegible] [illegible]—80. *Account of a Raja of* [illegible] *who persecuted the Jains.*

† *The Mackenzie Manuscripts*, Vol. I, p. 352.

them the big g[illegible]ry in the Lower Fort and the Kalyana Mahal. He also enclosed the three mountains b[illegible] a huge bastioned wall a[illegible]d a ditch with gateways fa[illegible] the towns of Vellore, Wandiwash, Valudāvūr, Tiruvannāmalai and Tindi[illegible]nam. The fort[illegible]ations on *Chakkili Drug* are his work. His long and pea[illegible]eful administration also resulted in the expansion of the town and the [illegible]ounding of many pettahs or suburbs.* He was succeeded by Achyuta Vij[illegible]ya Ramabhadra Naick who is claimed to have assisted in the construction of the temples at Tiruvannāmalai and Tindivanam; and it may be inferred that his authority was acknowledged all over these places. His successors† were not distinguished for their capacity or character. They were Muthialu Na[illegible]ck, [illegible]katappa Naick, Varadappa Naick and Appa Naick, the last two being particularly imbecile. At least the first few of them seem to have been able rulers who maintained the prestige of their kingdom undiminished. These were great patrons of learning, encouraged Brahman Pandits and were warmly attached to their Vaishnava Gurus.‡ The vast and innumerable structures within the fort, especially the concentric walls round *Rajagiri* must in the main be ascribed to them. Among the architectural monuments raised by the Naick rulers of Gingee may also be mentioned the temple at Vri[illegible]dhāchalam about seventy miles to the south of the capital. It is due to the libe[illegible]ty of Mangammal the consort of one of the later Naicks. Local tradition says that the Naicks were served by an able line of ministers of the Vellala caste, the most famous of whom was Nanda Gopala Pillai during the reign of the last chief.

When Sadasiva Raya was ruler of Vijayanagar (1542—1567 A.D.) the Naicks of Gingee professed complete obedience to the central power; for in an inscription found in the south wall of the central shrine of the

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* *The Mackenzie Manuscripts.* Vol. I, p. 853.

† *The Naick Dynasty of Gingee*:—Vaiyappa Naic[illegible] up to 1490 A.D.; Tubaki Krishnappa Naick (1490—1520 A.D.); Achyuta Vijaya Ramabhadra Naick (1520—1540 A.D.); Muthialu Naick (1540—1550 A.D.); Venkatappa Naick (1570—1600 A.D.); Varadappa Naick (1600—1620 A.D.); and Appa Naick (1620 A.D. up to the Mussalman Conquest).

‡ The Nallan Chakravarthies.

Venkatarama temple at Gingee, Sadasiva is entitled *Vira Pratapa Maharaya* (The Famous and Courageous Emperor); and there is also recorded a gift to Brahmans made by Surappa, a local chief for the continued prosperity of Sadasiva.* Even after the disruption of the Empire following the great disaster at Talikota, the Naicks of Gingee though virtually enjoying independent powers, took care to hide their real position under a cloak of nominal allegiance to the Rayas at Penukonda or Chandragiri. "Venkatapathi (1586—1614 A.D.) ruling at Chandragiri enjoined some degree of magnificence having his dominions governed by viceroys. Mackenzie gives the name of some of the principal viceroys and their provinces about the year 1597 A.D. They seem to have been 1. Krishnappa Naick at Gingee, etc., etc.........."† According to the *Mackenzie Manuscripts* there was no one of the name of Krishnappa ruling at that time in Gingee; still the Naick rule was existing there in nominal subjection to Chandragiri. An inscription which stands in the porch of the Perumal pagoda at Madura shows that in the year 1602 A.D. "*Sri Bhuvanēka Sri Vira Pratapa Rajēya Raja Paramēsvara Sri Vira Venkata Maharaya*" was the lord of the world and no mention is at all made of the local ruler of Madura.‡ It is quite improbable that while the larger and the more powerful principality at Madura was paying homage to Chandragiri, the smaller and the nearer one at Gingee could have become independent. According to the letter of a Jesuit, Father Vico, dated Madura the 30th August 1611, the three Naicks of Gingee, Tanjore and Madura seemed to have been dependent upon the Rayas at Chandragiri and to have paid to the latter fixed annual tributes of from six to ten million francs each.§ Probably up to the end of the rule of Venkatapathy who died in 1614 A.D. Gingee continued its dependence upon him while the anarchy that ensued after his death enabled its Naick to throw off the authority of his successors.

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* *Epigraphical Report* of 1904. Inscription No. 240, dated 1550 A.D.

† Sewell's *List of Antiquities*, Vol. II, p. 251.

‡ Nelson's *Madura Manual*, Part III, p. 108.

§ *Ibid*, Part III, p. 150. "Le grand Nayaker de Maduré, ainsi que ceux de Tanjaour et de Gingi, sont eux-memes tributaires du roi de Bisnagar, à qui ils paient doivent payer chacun un tribut annuel de six à dix millions de francs."

But Gingee was not fated to enjoy for long the independence that it now attained. A sense of self-complacency and arrogance was created in the minds of its rulers by the new state of affairs and they wholly neglected their administrative duties. From about 1635 A.D. the Bahmani Sultans of Bijapur and Golkonda began to send marauding parties to the south and one such raiding band under a chief Kamruddin Khan plundered Gingee itself and defeated the ruling Naick outside the fort overlooking the Tindivanam Darwasa (gateway).* In 1644, Rend Dh[illegible]la Khan, general of the forces of Bijapur, accompanied by Shāhji, the father of Sivāji as his second in command overran Bangalore and Kolar and pushed their conquests almost upon the confines of Vellore and Gingee.† A few years later the Naicks of Tanjore and Gingee combining with their kinsman of Madura as against their overlord at Chandragiri brought down upon themselves the united forces of the latter and Golkonda. The Mussalmans advanced upon Gingee; but Tirumala Naick of Madura (1623—1659 A.D.) now joined by the Sultan of Bijapur marched for its relief. Together they entered the place but a quarrel having occurred between the followers of Tirumala and those of the Naick of Gingee, the fortress fell easily into the hands of the Mussalmans of Bijapur and was plundered.‡ (16[illegible]8 A.D.) By 1660 A.D. the southern portion of the Lower Carnatic which extended from Guntur in the north to the Coleroon in the south, including Vellore, Gingee, Tanjore and possibly Trichinopoly became the possession of Bijapur while Golkonda acquired all the territory to the north of Vellore and including Chandragiri and Chinglepur.§

* *The Mackenzie Manuscripts*, Vol. I, p. 368.

† Wilks' *History of South India and Mysore*, Vol. I, p. 66.

‡ Nelson's *Madura Manual*, Part III, p. 185 and Garstin's *South Arcot Manual*, p. 6. Sewell in his *Sketch of South Indian Dynasties* (p. 62) states that these occurrences must have taken place in 1658 shortly before Tirumala's death. Orme places the conquest of Gingee by Bijapur about 1655; *vide* his *Historical Fragments of the Moghul Empire*, p. 209.

§ Orme's *Historical Fragments of the Moghul Empire*, p. 231, and Wilks' *History South India and Mysore*, Vol. I, p. 66.

There may be a doubt whether in this general scramble for possessions Gingee had not fall into the hands of Golkonda. But Wilks refutes it by saying that

III.

GINGEE AFTER ITS CONQUEST BY THE MUSSALMANS.

From the time when the fortress fell into the hands of Bijapur it rose to a pre-eminent position of strategic importance and was considered the key to the whole of the Lower Carnatic. Its command of the coast brought it into close contact with the rising European settlements on the Coromandel; while its central position and easy access to the forts of Wandiwash and Vellore, Chingleput and Conjeevaram, Trichinopoly and Salem, served to raise its military value. The Bijapur authorities renamed it *Badshahbad* and appointed chiefs over the neighbouring strongholds of Valudāvur, Tiruvannāmalai, Volcondah and Pālaiyamkōttai.* The old Naick family was completely extinguished, though there was an abortive attempt made about 1662 A.D. by Chokkanatha of Madura (1660—1682 A.D.) to restore the Naick family at Gingee and even the Vijayanagar dynasty at Chandragiri. This was planned by Kumarayyan, the Commander-in-Chief of the forces of Mysore at that time, but failed ignominiously, owing to the fact that Lingama Naick, the Madura general, took a bribe from the ruler of Gingee and only wasted time in a purposeless campaign.†

The Sultan of Bijapur gradually strengthened his hold over the fortress by settling Mussalman jaghirdars in Dévanúr, Malaiyanúr, Ulundúrpet and other villages in the vicinity. Sayyid Nasir Khan was made killādar of the fortress and Sidi Amber Khan was appointed foujdar of the country.‡ There was such a large migration of Mussalmans to the neighbourhood that a kazi (civil judge) had to be appointed

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Gunjeecottah on the North Pennar which was taken about this time by Mir Jumla, the general of Golkonda, was most probably mis-written as Gingee and hence arose the mistake. Orme says that letters written from Madras in the years 1661 to 1675 A.D. distinctly prove that Gingee was subject to Bijapur. And at the time of Sivāji's irruption into the Carnatic it was undoubtedly in the hands of a general of Bijapur.

* *The Mackenzie Manuscripts*, Vol. I, pp. 360—64.

[illegible]kōttai is now a ruined fort about twenty miles west of the town of Chidambaram.

† Nelson's *Madura Manual*, Part III, p. 180. (Nagoji was then the general of Bijapur at Gingee).

‡ *The Mackenzie Manuscripts*, Vol. I, p. 364.

to administer the law of the *Koran* to Muhammadan litigants. "That the authority of the Gingee government stretched over the whole of the present South Arcot District is attested by the facts that in 1674 the President of the Council of *Fort St. George* negotiated with its killādar about the purchase of the site of Porto Novo (in the south-east corner of the district)* and that tribute was collected from the various petty jaghirs even as far distant as Volcondah.† The town was also important enough to attract the notice of the famous Jesuit Mission at Madura from which was despatched Father Andre Freire in 1675 A.D. who converted here about forty people to his own faith. The Christian community in the country became so numerous that there were special congregations at Gingee and Tiruvādi in 1681 and 1682 A.D.‡ The whole country however was being wasted with fire and sword owing to internecine quarrels among the authorities themselves at the fortress.§

Sivaji's irruption into South India in the spring of 1677 A.D. was of very great moment for the future of the place. The local Governor, Amber Khan and his sons, Roop Khan and Nasir Muhammad were easily deceived by the professions of friendship which the wily Marātha displayed and the fort fell into his hands without a blow being struck. Gingee was strengthened by every means that could be devised so as to make it fit to command the whole plain as far as the Coleroon. The Marátha revenue system was introduced; Ramajee Nulgay, a Mawāli officer, was appointed havildar of the place; and Sivaji's half-brother, Santaji, was made regent on his departure. With the latter were associated in the general management of the Carnatic affairs two well-known persons Humbeer Row Sināpathi and Ragunath Narain.‖

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* *Press List of Madras Records.*—Minutes of Consultation embodied in Letter No. 44 of 1674. Also, Orme's *Historical Fragments*, p. 115: "Application had to be made to the Bijapur Governor of Gingee."

† *The Mackenzie Manuscripts*, Vol. I. p. 868.

‡ Francis' *Gazetteer of the South Arcot District*, p. 81.

§ *Madura Manual*, Part III, p. 197.

‖ Grant-Duff's *History of the Mahrattas*, Vol. I. p. 279.

The Mackenzie Manuscripts declare that Sivaji enthroned his brother Raja Ram as king of Gingee. A legend is current that Sivaji was born in the fortress. This is [illegible]futed by Orme in his *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, [illegible] p. 151. Popular tradition ascribes the building of many of the fortifications to the Marathas.

From this time forwards the Marāthās were in continuous possession of Gingee and Vellore up to 1698 A.D. when they were driven out of the Carnatic by the Moghuls under Zulfikār Khan. They made incursions from time to time on Mysore and even attempted to storm Bangalore in 1687 though unsuccessfully.* Harja Raja as the viceroy of Sambhājī was ruling with full authority at Gingee over the whole of the Carnatic and was known by the title of the *Great Subhadar*. He was so powerful that he was once suspected by Sambhājī of a design to sell both the fort and his own services to the Moghuls; and two generals, Santaji Row and Kesava Pant, were ordered to Gingee to keep him in firm allegiance to the Government at Satārā.† Harja Raja had havildars under him at Porto Novo and Tindivanam who entered into negotiations with the English Company for the sale of the sites of Porto Novo, Cuddalore and Kunimedu (thirteen miles north of Pondicherry) in 1681 and 1682 A.D.‡ In 1687 the English received a lease for the transfer to themselves of these places from Harja Raja. Three years afterwards the Company's factors at Madras entered into negotiations with the agent of Gingee, Sounde Bollojee, for the purchase of the old native fort at Dēvanāmpatnam§ (the later Fort. St. David).

The immense strength of Gingee together with the prestige that it had attained made it an object worthy of the attention of Aurangzeb when he invaded the southern possessions of Bijapur and Golkonda. Appointing Mir Hussein (*alias* Ali Mardan Khan) as the governor of Conjeevaram which was then under the control of Bijapur, the Emperor sent Zulfikār Khan into the Gingee territory whither the Marātha leader Ram Raja had fled in 1690 A.D. after the death of his brother Sambhājī. Zulfikar won a battle near Korrumcondah over the Marātha generals Ajit Naire and Ismael Mukh and began in 1694 A.D. the siege of the fortress in real earnest.‖

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* Grant-Duff's *History of the Mahrattas*, Vol. I, p. 349.

† Orme's *Historical Fragments*, pp. 155, 156, 299 and 303.

‡ *Press List of Madras Records*.—Letters 1173 and 1379 of 1681 A.D., dealing about the purchase of Porto Novo from the local Marātha Governor, Gopal Dadaji Pant.

§ *Press List of Madras Records*.—Letters 90, 91, 97, 100, 101, etc. of 1690 A.D.

‖ Scott's edition of Ferishta's *History of the Dekhan*, Vol. II, pp. 79—80.

Leaving the chief of Conjeevaram in charge of the besieging camp Zulfikar marched south against the tributary Marāthā principalities into the territory of Trichinopoly and Tanjore. In spite of all his successes in the field the siege of this *Eastern Troy* strained the resources of the Moghuls so much that they had to retire baffled in 1696 A.D. to Bindwastni (possibly Wandiwash). Grain was scarce, fodder was unobtainable, provisions had to be secured from a distance, and to crown all there were dissensions in the Imperial Camp between the commanding officer Zulfikār and Kam Baksh a prince of the blood who was in nominal charge of the expedition, each of whom had entertained schemes of establishing an independent kingdom with the fortress as its nucleus. These dissensions were fanned into a flame by the Vizier Assad Khan the father of Zulfikār who was always intriguing in favour of his son. The Marāthās seem to have displayed great fortitude in this hour of their trial and two of their chiefs Dannaji Jadu and Santaji Gorpara greatly distinguished themselves by means of sorties on the assaulters.† In 1696 A.D. the English at Fort St. David were warned to be on good terms with Ram Raja and his officers; while Zulfikār Khan was refused a loan of an hundred thousand pagodas by Governor Nathaniel Higginson (1692—98 A.D.)‡ This conclusively proves that up to 1696 A.D. the tide of fortune had not yet turned decisively against the Marāthās. Santaji however was defeated disastrously at Kaveripak in 1697 A.D. while party strife was raging in the Marātha camp. The Brahman minister of Gingee Ramachandra Pandit espoused the cause of Danna as against Santa who was killed in a fray. Zulfikār was now informed that the favour in which he was held in the Imperial Court would depend upon his speedy capture of the fortress. In 1698 A.D. assisted by the impetuous Pathān officer Daud Khan he breached the outer wall at two points and barricaded the citadel on Rajagiri which soon fell.§ Ram Raja's wife threw

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* Wilks' *History of South India and Mysore*, Vol. I, p. 218.

† Grant-Duff's *History of the Mahratts*, Vol. I, p. 380.

A victory was won at Kaveripak over the Moghul foujdar of Conjeevaram.

‡ Wheeler's *History of the English Settlements in India*, p. 1[illegible].

§ Details of the siege are given in p. 86 of the second volume of Scott's *Dekhan*. There is some doubt with regard to the date of the fall of the fortress. Scott puts it as 170[illegible] A.D.; while 1698 A.D. is the date according to the *Madras Records*.

herself down from the rocks while he himself escaped in disguise to Tanjore where his kinsmen were ruling. The fortress was renamed *Nasrat Gaddah* in honor of Zulfikar Khan who was otherwise known as Nasrat Shah. Ghuzzanfar Khan was appointed killādār of the fort for the present and Daud Khan was made foujdar of the whole Carnatic.

From this time the importance of Gingee as the key to the whole of the district is lessened. After the fall of the Moghul Empire consequent upon the death of Aurangzeb the country was split up into a number of local governorships united only by a tie of nominal allegiance to the subhadar of the Carnatic. Daud Khan the Moghul representative was accustomed to carry on raiding expeditions from Gingee to all parts of the *Payeenghaut* (Carnatic below the Ghauts) and especially to the European settlements on the coast. The story of the mollification of the Khan's anger by timely presents of French cordials by the Governor of Fort St. George is too well-known to need repetition.* Fort St. David was also beleaguered in 1702 A.D. While three years before that date Sulaiman Khan a Moghul captain had attacked and twice threatened Cuddalore

That about 1701 A.D. the Emperor Aurangzeb granted the jaghir of Gingee to a Bundela from the north named Sarup Singh who was at the same time raised to the *mansab* of two thousand horse is known from two sources.† The chief also got a gift of the neighbouring places of Valudāvūr, Tindivanam, Tirukkōyilur, Vettavalam, Tiruvamuttūr and Asuppūr.‡ Under Sarup Singh Gingee was roused from its lethargy and came into prominence distinguishing itself by attempts to intimidate the Europeans in the neighbourhood. The chief of Gingee confined two Englishmen from Fort St. David in his fortress without adducing any proper reasons for his action; hostilities

The latter date is upheld by Wheeler in his *History of the English Settlements in India* and Wilks states that the place was carried off early in 1698 (*History of S. India and Mysore*, Vol. I, p. 215). Grant-Duff says that the final assault was made early in January 1698. These agree with the date given in the *Complete History of the Carnatic Kings*, Fasli 1107, (A.D. 1697-98).

* Wheeler's *History of the English Settlements in India*, pp. 105-106.

† *The Complete History of the Carnatic Kings*, in the *Mackenzie MSS.*, Vol. ... and *Chenchi Rajakkal Kaifiyut* in the *Mackenzie MSS.*, Vol. II, pp. 19—32.

‡ *The Mackenzie MSS.*, Vol I, p. 878.

broke out in 1711 A.D.; the English were blockaded in their fort and peace was made ultimately in the next year through the mediation of the French Governor at Pondicherry.* Probably Sarup Singh died soon after this event and was succeeded by his son Desing † the famous hero of the well-known popular ballad entitled *Desingu Rajan Charitram*‡ and commonly but erroneously ascribed to the authorship of the Tamil poet Pughalendi Pulavar.§ Head-strong and short-tempered, Desing soon provoked a violent quarrel with his suzerain Sādat-Allah-Khan the Nawab of Arcot and brought down upon his little principality the whole forces of the Carnatic. After a heroic defence of the fort and a vigorous hand-to-hand battle fought outside it, chiefly with the help of his friend Muhabat Khan the killadar of Valudāvūr (the same who blockaded Fort St. David in 1711 on behalf of Sarup Singh) both the young friends perished leaving the place an easy prey to the Mussalman conqueror. The fight took place in Fasli 1124 (1714-15 A.D.); and the Nawab was so much struck with the heroism of the young queen of Desing who committed Sati on her husband's funeral pile that soon after he reached Arcot, he founded in honour of the self-immolated lady a small town on the opposite bank of the Pālār and named it Rānipettah.|| In memory of this victory the Nawab had a picturesque mosque (even now in good condition) erected in the Lower Fort of Gingee; and an inscription over its gateway reveals to us the exact date of the battle. Sarvaghuna Kumāra Yachama Naidu of Venkatagiri who ruled from

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* *Press List of Madras Records.*—Letter 610 of 1711 and Letter 904 of 1712.

† The name is spelt:—

(*a*) Jaya Singh in Wilson's *Mackenzie Collection*;

(*b*) Desing by Taylor and in the *Mackenzie MSS.*;

(*c*) Tej Singh in Sewell's '*List of Antiquities*'; and

(*d*) Tejab Singh in Burhanuddin's '*Carnatic and Kurnool.*'

‡ This ballad is peculiarly valuable since it is one of the very few Tamil songs commemorating historical deeds and since it is tolerably accurate from a historical point of view. The pride of the Hindu bard makes him declare that the Nawab could not have won the victory had it not been for the treacherous slaying of Desing's charger and the consequent disaster.

§ The poet lived long before Desing's times (in the latter half of the twelfth century).

|| *North Arcot Manual*, Vol. II, p. 434.

1695 to 174? A.D. is known to have fought against Desing*; while one Khan Sahib the Killādar of Kal[illegible]kurichi about fifty miles to the south of Gingee took part with the Nawab against Desing.†

It was probably at this time that those acts of vandalism were perpetrated which resulted in the desertion of the town and in its present desolated aspect. The anarchy that prevailed there after the extinction of the Rajputs destroyed the political unity of the neighbourhood and the fortress lost the pre-eminent position that it had hitherto held. The decline in the importance of the place might have also partly resulted from the increasing unhealthiness of the locality which necessitated the removal of the Moghul cantonment stationed here to Arcot on the Pālār in 1716 A.D.‡

After 1714 A.D. though Gingee had become degraded into a small feudatory principality under the complete suzerainty of the Nawab of Arcot, it did not cease to attract bold adventurers who saw in its possession the first possible step towards the establishment of complete independence. Two chiefs Tahir Khan and Abdul Naby Khan ambitious for the possession of Gingee fought a battle in 1724 A.D. in which both lost their lives; and at the same time Sādat-Alla-Khan entered and took possession of the fort a second time.§ Then there is a gap for about fifteen years in the history of the place. About 1739 A.D. it comes again into notice as a place of refuge for Nawab Safdar Ali the son of Dost Ali when his territory was over-run by the Marāthās under Ragbuji Bhonslā. Possibly the site was chosen as the most convenient halting stage between Arcot and Pondicherry whose Governor Dumas, with a far-reaching political vision extended a warm welcome to the refugee Nawab.

In the Carnatic Wars between the rival claimants for the thrones of Arcot and Hyderabad, Gingee figured prominently as the scene of a large number of operations. In the middle of March, 1750 A.D., Nasir Jang

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* Sewell's *South Indian Dynasties*, p. 102.

† Francis' *Gazetteer of the South Arcot District*, p. 323.

‡ Wilks' *History of South India and Mysore*, Vol I, p. 215.

§ Burhanuddin's *History of the Carnatic and Kurnool*, p. 22.

Abdul Naby Khan was the chief of Porto Novo; and Tahir Khan was ruling Tripassore near Tiruvellore in the district of Chingleput.

arrived there with a huge army and decided to give battle to his enemies. Soon after this the French established a station of their own near the place as well as others at Tiruvadi on the Pennār and at Valudāvur.* The brilliant exploit of Bussy in capturing the fort by a surprise night-assault might be best told in Orme's own words. "A detachment of 250 Europeans and 1200 Sepoys with four field-pieces commanded by Mr. Bussy set out before the rest of the army.........and the main body followed under Mr. D'Anteuil. The French bombarded the fort with mortars and fired upon them with artillery until the moon set which was the signal to storm the fortifications on the mountains. None but the Europeans were destined to this hardy enterprise who attacked all the three mountains at the same time and found on each redoubts after redoubts which they carried successfully sword in hand until they came to the summits.........They nevertheless pushed on and petarded the gates; and by daybreak were in possession of them all having lost only twenty men in the different attacks......The great reputation of the strength of Gingee naturally exalted the fame of the French prowess."†

Nasir Jang stung to indignation by this action of the French, collected a great army and advanced on Gingee towards the end of September 1750 A.D. with the intention of speedily effecting its re-capture. But the monsoon setting in, his army when about fifteen miles from the place was rendered incapable of marching further by the inundations all round. The rains having ceased on the 4th of December, Dupleix ordered the French garrison at Gingee to advance against Nasir Jang's camp where the Subhadar was soon shot dead in a fray by the treacherous Pathān Nawabs of Kurnool, Savanore and Cuddapah, who were in collusion with the French. Raja Sahib, the son of Chanda Ṣahib, after he was forced to raise the siege of Arcot in 1751 A.D., fled to Ārni but quitted it in a great hurry intending to make the best of his way to Gingee and seek refuge with the French there. These incidents show that the fortress was even then recognised as formidable and as a fairly invulnerable place.

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* Orme's *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, Vol I, p. 149.

† *Ibid*, Vol. I, pp. 151-152.

On the 23rd July, 17[illegible]2 A.D. Maj[illegible]er, was sent by the English Government to wrest the fortress from th[illegible] of the French. It was natural that without a large E[illegible]opean force and heavy field-pieces he despaired of even effectively attacking the vast fort enclosed by circular chains of mountains and returned to Fort St. David without having effected anything. The French were firm in their possession of the place and even when their fortunes sank low in the succeeding years they would not relax their grip of it. In 1754 A.D. the garrison of the fort was so bold as to issue out of the place and take the stronghold of Utramallore* about twenty miles to the south-west of Sadras. In the campaigns after the disgrace of Dupleix and during the time of Lally, Gingee with the neighbouring strongholds of Chetpat † and Elavanasur ‡ served to the French as bases of resistance from which they might emerge and lay waste the surrounding country. In September, 1758 A.D., Lally visited the place; while even as late as May 1760 A.D. it is known that the French continued masters of the country between Gingee and Tiyāga Drug (Thiagar of Orme).§ During the seige of Pondicherry by Colonel Coote the fort served as a centre for gathering together bands of French soldiers and some banditti in the pay of Haidar Ali who himself was said to have had an eye on the fortress.‖ The English garrison from a neighbouring village named Rattlagramam was closely watching the movements of the French inside; and it was only in January 1761 A.D. that Coote sent eight companies of Sepoys under the orders of Captain Smith to actually invest the fort. The garrison consisted of only 150 Frenchmen, 600 Sepoys and about 1000 natives of the adjoining hills. On the 3rd February, *Chakkili Drug* or St. George's Mountain as it was otherwise called was captured and it was followed by the rapid surrender of the other forts.

Once more and for the last time the fortress changed hands. During the First Mysore War (1769 A.D.) Colonel Smith frequently manœuvred between Madras and Gingee.** And during the last earnest

* In the district of Chingleput.

† In the district of North Arcot.

‡ In the taluk of Tirukkōyilūr.

§ Orme, Vol. III, p. 636.

‖ Ibid, Vol. III, p. 696.

** Wilks' *History of South India and Mysore*, Vol. II, p. 120.

attempt of the French [illegible] conjunction with Haidar Ali to oust the English from South India it regained for a moment its strategic and military importance. Ensign Macaulay was sent in 1780 A.D. to defend the fort, but owing to the insufficiency of the forces and their mutinous spirit was compelled to capitulate and leave the place to the mercy of the enemy.*

From the close of the Second Mysore War, Gingee was free from the ravages and anarchy of war. But malaria which was long believed to haunt the place has led to its rapid desertion and depopulation, while the fortifications and structures have been allowed to crumble to decay. About the fifties of the last century there was a suggestion made to the Madras Government for converting the halls and unused granaries into a depot for the storage of salt.† The proposal was strengthened by the plea that Gingee being midway between Marakkānam on the coast where there are salt pans and Tiruvannāmalai and other places it would all the more effectively serve its purpose. The prospects of the preservation of the fort are now somewhat brighter since the Archæological Department has seriously taken in hand the work of repair and renovation; and very recently the village below the hills was converted into the head-quarters of a new taluk, the general health of the place having greatly improved.

It is a melancholy reflection indeed for the historian, that what was once a scene of bustling animation and dazzling military pomp, can boast at present of only a few humble habitations with a handful of peaceful agriculturists. Where chargers once pranced in martial array, the bullocks drag the ploughshare, goaded by a half-naked farmer; the constable with his baton is found enough for keeping the peace; and the spider weaves its web where the rulers sat in state and administered the affairs of their realm. But the memory of at least one of the brave chieftains of the line is preserved to this day in every town and hamlet of Southern India. The wandering minstrel sings to groups of simple villagers under the banyan tree, of the heroism of Desing of Gingee, of how he loved and fought and fell.

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* Wilks' *History of South India and Mysore*, Vol II, p. 261.

† *The Madras Journal of Literature and Science*, Vol. V, p. 358.

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